



WHERE

The venue

“A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos. If we are unable to understand, we often turn to tradition, thoughtlessly seize explanations by authority figures, or resort to various psychological mechanisms, such as projection and rationalization, to create imaginary meanings.”

–Jack Mezirow & Associates (2000)

In this brief chapter you will explore through the lens of Dialogue Education some things to consider when choosing or working with the location of the training event, especially as it relates to safely engaging the whole person. Think of the location as the handrails on the bridge we are building from the known to the unknown; although the bridge may be long or unsteady, or our steps may falter, the handrails are firm, consistent and sustaining. As you read this chapter, decide what will best support participants’ learning within the particular location and space, and determine what you might need to change or adjust to ensure their safety.

Your choices in the WHERE – as well as within the other seven steps of design – will increase the likelihood of safety and engagement. As you prepare and choose your venue, keep these principles in mind:

Engagement is the principle of welcoming and integrating the mind (cognition), heart (affect) and body (psychomotor) into the learning. Not only does this make the learning more meaningful, but research shows that engagement increases memory retention, honors physical and emotional needs, and opens multiple channels for receiving, processing and assessing information. In applying the principle of engagement to your venue, it's good to consider the following:

- Have two or more seating areas for everyone so you can easily move people around and create mini-environments. For example, use a circle of chairs for beginning and ending the day (and as you wish at other times) to bring everyone together as equals on the same footing; a circle is welcoming and sets the tone for participation.
- Use small round tables with chairs to create a space for small group work.
- Move from one seating area to another to change the energy in the room. Movement increases learning; consider how people can move around in this space.

Safety is paramount in any learning situation. If people experience too much anxiety or aren't challenged enough they can grow bored, become inhibited, and resentful. The way you set up the space effects people's sense of safety. Here are just a few considerations you might think about as you are setting up your space:

- Are the building and room accessible to everyone? If not, how will you manage this?
- Is the space welcoming? How can you make it even more welcoming?
- What will enhance the learning? What might be distracting to the learning?
- What and how can you modify the space to be most conducive to learning, given the situation?
- What will you need to consider about the space as you create learning tasks in the eighth step?

In this step – WHERE – you also name the resources you’ll need to have available in the space, such as tables and chairs, easels, white boards, walls for posting charts, a screen or white wall if using slides, tables for food, a circle of chairs to accommodate everyone present, and any other items you and the learners will need. Take a look at these examples:

FITNESS TRAINING

	Prior to LNRA	Midway LNRA	LNRA Phase 1 Complete	LNRA data implications for design
A.	There is a Bank across the street from the gym with a conference room that we may be able to use.	Bank room is available for first two days, not the third.	The room has one Board-room type table; easels, LCD panel, windows, and easily will fit the 12 people. Nice comfortable chairs.	Plan gym-specific activities for day three; consider how closing and "graduation" could take advantage of being in the gym. How can you best work with or around the clients that are sure to be coming and going during the time in gym facilities?

Busyness-Reduction for Women

B.	Choice between medium or smaller rooms.	The larger space has desks that would need to be moved; the smaller space may work. Main door of the building is locked at 5:15.	Circle of chairs and small tables fit fine in smaller space. Easel, table for refreshments and good lighting.	Use small room and because the door is locked at 5:15, you'll need to post a sign about how people can get in.
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Not-for-Profit Board Training

C.	Offices and warehouse-like space is available.	There is a large room that can be used for training and lunch.	Equipment will need to be rented ahead of time; room is rather dull.	There are no windows. Bring plants or flowers; tables can be set up for 4 per table.
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YOUR TASK

In your 8 Steps of Design Worksheet, complete your WHERE. If needed, jot any notes to yourself regarding space strengths and limitations; you'll want to keep these in mind when you

begin creating your Achievement-Based Objectives (in the WHAT FOR Step) and learning tasks (in the HOW).



REMEMBER

Look for what you can do to create the best space for learning, including minimizing and mediating anything that might make learning more difficult.